General Notes

NOTES FROM LAKE COUNTY

WESTERN SANDPIPER.—Sunday, July 20, 1919, I flushed five small "peeps" that were feeding along the beach of Lake Erie. Peep-like, they flew a hundred yards, turned, came back and alighted practically in the same place, which was not over a rod from where I stood. As they lit in I put my glass on them and said to myself, "Four Semipalmated Sandpipers and a Red-back." But immediately the absurdity of its being a Red-back was evident, for *they* were not due for nearly three months, the bird was too small, and though the bill was long and bent at the tip, it was not near the length of a Red-back. To make my meaning clear, and to let the reader understand why I momentarily thought it a Red-back, will say the bill of this little peep bore the same approximate ratio to the size of the bird as does the bill of the Red-back to the size of that bird.

I watched them a long time as they fed along the water's edge, keeping so near that the semipalmation of the feet could be readily seen as they lifted them. (I have often noticed the Semipalmated lifts its feet differently than does the Least Sandpiper,—as though they were heavier, and when very near one could imagine they had mud between their toes.) I estimated, while watching them, the length of the bills of the four Semipalmates to be not over .75 of an inch, while that of the Western was fully 1.25 and distinctly bent at the tip. I knew the Western *would* have a longer bill but was not prepared for quite such a difference nor for such a decided bend. Upon reaching home I looked up measurements and found the extremes to be .66 for the minimum of the Semipalmated and 1.20 for the maximum *female* Western. Therefore my field estimation was not far out of the way, and the bird must have been a female with extreme length of bill. Half an inch added to the bill of a bird as small as a Peep makes a very evident change in its appearance. In the lately published "Game Birds of California" there is a cut of the heads of Least and Western Sandpipers which conforms very closely to my birds, although I would say this particular specimen had a still more evident bend at the tip.

PARASITIC JAEGER.—This bird is reported now and then along the lakes, but I made a record of it September 20, 1914, that may be worth while to publish on account of its early appearance. While walking the beach I noticed a dead bird on the sand that at a casual glance I took to be a Crow's remains and would have

passed it by had I not noticed the webbed feet. Upon close examination I found it to be a Jaeger, from the hooked bill with separate nail; and called it Parasitic mainly from size of bird, and relative size of the bill compared to that of a Pomarine in my possession. It was doubtless an immature for I could detect no lengthening of the central tail feathers. The plumage was so greased from the decayed flesh,—for nothing was left but bones and feathers—that little could be said of original coloration. All looked an oily brownish black. As the bird could not have reached its condition in much less than ten days' time, its death must have occurred as early as September 10.

HENSLOWS SPARROW.—At last a record for Lake County! After waiting for many years with open ears, whenever in a likely place to hear it, I was awarded on May 10 (1919), when, in a pouring rain I was passing a field often frequented by Grasshopper Sparrows, by hearing a most vehement "*se-lick se-lick*," and sure enough, there on top of some bent-over grass the little fellow sat. I approached as close as I dared, shielding my glass with an umbrella, and took notice of the streaked sides, the characteristic black marks on the head, and particularly of the bill. This last should serve as a good field mark in conjunction with the streaked sides, for it is larger than that of the Grasshopper Sparrow,—seemingly out of proportion to the size of the bird. Had hopes it would remain to breed, but have neither seen nor heard it since.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER.—The spring migration, deficient in the numbers of many species, and especially so in regard to the Black-throated Blue (only four individuals having been seen), contained, however, a generous sprinkling of this scarce and easily overlooked nondescript Warbler. I had opportunity to study it closely and took advantage of it. Although the first suspects were high in the trees and the identity arrived at mainly by a chance song, a few days later I found a few at two different locations marooned in low growth by stress of chilly and cloudy weather. A particularly pleasant hour was spent with one on May 17 among a mixed company of Warblers in a thorn bush thicket. Chilly and with a fine drizzle of rain, all the other species were diligently and dejectedly feeding without a sound, but the little Orange-crowned kept up a continuous movement, flitting its wings like a Kinglet, and passing from one thorn bush to another, the busiest bird in the lot; and I would have lost him a number of times had he not kept up a loud and oft repeated "chip, chip, chip," which enabled me to locate him again at once.

PINE WARBLER AS A SUMMER RESIDENT.—On July 16, and also again on the 21st, 1919, I watched for some time a female of this species. The bird was in an old gravel pit grown up to a thicket

of Yellow Locust some twenty feet high. The ground below being almost barren of undergrowth it was not unlike the floor of a pinery. One side of the pit is bounded by the wooded bank of a stream, upon which were a few white pines and some hemlock. She was hunting the branches and leaf fronds for food, and kept very quiet, uttering only a soft low "seep, seep," when about to fly from one tree to another.

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WATERFOWL DIE FROM EATING SHOT

Wild ducks and other waterfowl sometimes die from lead poisoning resulting from swallowing stray shot which they pick out of the mud about shooting grounds. Many ducks that become sick from lead poisoning finally recover, but it is probable that the effect is permanently injurious not only to the individual but to the species. It has been ascertained by experiment that lead greatly impairs the virility of male domestic fowls. Females mated with them lay many infertile eggs, while in many of the eggs that are fertilized the embryo dies in the shell or the chick emerges weak and unable to withstand the hardships of early life. What effect lead poisoning has on female wild fowl has not been definitely ascertained, but, as the fact is well known that lead produces abortion in female mammals, there is a possibility that it exerts a bad effect on female waterfowl during the breeding season. Thus, the supply of waterfowl is likely to be decreased by lead poisoning not only by the number of birds that die directly from it but indirectly by impairment of reproduction.

These facts are set forth by the United States Department of Agriculture in Bulletin 793, "Lead Poisoning in Waterfowl," about to be published as a contribution from the Bureau of Biological Survey. Reports of waterfowl apparently sick from lead poisoning have been coming in for several years. The Biological Survey undertook an investigation at various shooting grounds to determine how common the taking of shot by waterfowl is, and a series of experiments to ascertain the effect of shot swallowed. It was found that at places where much shooting is regularly done from blinds, shot at the bottom of the shallow water are so numerous that one or more was found in practically every sieveful of mud or silt, and that they are swallowed by waterfowl whenever found as a result of this habit of swallowing small, hard objects to supply grit for the gizzard.

The experiments have shown that shot swallowed are gradually ground away in the gizzard and pass into the intestines, pro-